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FM AMCONSUL MONTERREY  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3238  
INFO RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY 4260  
RUEHXC/ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE  
RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS  
RUEHMC/AMCONSUL MONTERREY 8755

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 MONTERREY 000496

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [KPAO](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [ECON](#) [MX](#)  
SUBJECT: MONTERREY CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS WHA POSITIVE AGENDA

MONTERREY 00000496 001.2 OF 003

11. Summary: On October 15-17, a conference in Monterrey entitled, 'Philanthropy and the Non-Profit Sector - The Road to Developing Multinational Strategic Alliances,' highlighted the USG positive agenda for Latin America. WHA PDAS Kelly, the keynote speaker, outlined USG efforts to strengthen civil society and promote social justice in the hemisphere. Co-organized by post and the Mexico Chapter of the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP), the conference brought together over 500 Mexican and American leaders of business, foundations, civil society organizations and government to form partnerships to improve education, health care and economic opportunity. Monterrey Consul General Bruce Williamson spoke at the October 17 closing session. The event received wide TV, radio and print media coverage. Ultimately, the measure of the conference's success will be the degree to which it leads to effective follow-up projects; to this end, post hosted an October 28 luncheon for NCCEP's President with business executives to discuss ways to keep the momentum going. End Summary.

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FOCUS ON IMPROVING PHILANTHROPY'S PROSPECTS  
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12. The conference's primary focus was to explore, in the Mexican context, how philanthropy and cooperation among non-profits, business and government could improve health care, education and economic opportunity. A large part of the discussion was about encouraging a policy framework within which NGOs could flourish and corporations would have more incentive to engage in philanthropy. Many of our contacts lament that the Mexican NGO community is far from as robust as it could be. They say burdensome government regulations make it more difficult than it should be to establish an NGO, and add that Mexican corporations are often hesitant to give because they doubt the competence of many Mexican NGO's and worry their money will not be used properly.

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PARTICIPANTS AND SPONSORS  
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13. NCCEP-Mexico, the main conference organizer, is an NGO

dedicated to developing and strengthening partnerships in low income communities, among the private sector, educational and philanthropic institutions and government in order to help improve public education, increase students' academic achievement, and increase low-income students' access to higher education. Conference participants included Mexican and American corporate CEOs, presidents of foundations, policy makers, local and national NGOs, and state and federal government representatives. The government of Mexico was represented by the ministries of education, health, social development and foreign relations. Over 65 sponsors from both Mexico and the U.S supported the event, including Microsoft, Mexico's leading coca cola bottler and food company Femsa, the U.S. supermarket chain HEB, Monterrey's flagship corporation CEMEX, the Washington Center, and Dartmouth and Harvard Universities.

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PDAS KELLY: THE POSITIVE AGENDA  
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¶4. PDAS Kelly's remarks focused on how Americans and Mexicans, both in and outside of government, could work together to build a more democratic and prosperous hemisphere. He set the theme of the conference - creating partnerships between government, business, foundations and community organizations to improve lives and access to opportunity - within the framework of the positive agenda. He highlighted this message by describing three key initiatives in which the U.S. and Mexico are partners: the Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas Initiative, the Merida Initiative, and the Summit of the Americas.

MONTERREY 00000496 002.2 OF 003

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HEALTH: PARTNERSHIPS TO SOLVE PROBLEMS  
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¶5. The conference presentations on health emphasized that the enormity of social and health issues in Mexico make it difficult for just one sector working alone to make progress. The main message of these sessions was that to implement successful public health programs, NGOs, corporations, and government must collaborate. Experts from various health fields presented several examples of public-private partnerships that combat major health problems in Mexico. Nancy Alvey, Director/Team Leader, Health Program USAID/Mexico, told of how, with USAID support, a National Business Council on AIDS (CONAES) had been launched to reduce HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination in the workplace. The spread of HIV/AIDS in Mexico is greatly exacerbated by such stigma and discrimination, which acts as a barrier to prevention, testing, and treatment. By using media effectively and involving key opinion leaders, the project has dramatically raised public awareness of HIV-related stigma while giving credit to those companies that dedicate resources to reduce it. CONAES has affected 150,000 Mexican workers, and an estimated 560,000 family members. It includes 25 member companies committed to eradicating HIV-related discrimination.

¶6. Another example that was presented of a successful public-private partnership that is improving human health is the HEB-run program 'Partnerships with Food Banks,' a collaboration

with Caritas, a Catholic humanitarian organization, to provide food to low-income populations. This program targets 9 cities and reaches 350,000 people and 1,250 institutions by coordinating food distribution between donors and recipients. During this session ways to form partnerships that support social assistance programs were presented and best practices used on both sides of the border were compared.

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EDUCATION: THE GLOBAL CLASSROOM  
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17. Educational partnership, a main focus of NCCEP's work, was a recurrent theme during the conference. The need for collaborative programs to improve education in Mexico was presented, as well as the idea of 'globalizing' the classroom, by improving language instruction, stimulating intercultural understanding, and providing educational opportunities for exchange programs. Cross-border alignment of curriculum, higher education standards, and the strengthening of bilateral educational agreements were topics explored by panel speakers. The partnership between the American Institute of Monterrey, the Ministry of Education of Nuevo Leon, the City of San Pedro, Microsoft, and AXTEL, a major Mexican telecommunications company, was featured as a model to be replicated by conference participants. Their 'Escuela de Clase Mundial' project provides public elementary schools in San Pedro with infrastructure, technology, and best teaching and learning practices to improve the educational achievements of its students. The ultimate goal of this program, which has been recognized for its success, is to raise the skills of students, particularly in math and Spanish, to levels of global competitiveness.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CORPORATE PHILANTHROPY  
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18. Conference economic development sessions focused on partnerships to promote social justice through training and assistance programs, and to encourage corporations to demonstrate social responsibility in their communities. This programming helped participants develop strategies for their own

MONTERREY 00000496 003.2 OF 003

organizations and promoted collaborations between the NGO, corporate, and government sectors. An example of corporate responsibility in action was presented by representatives from the CEMEX corporation, a worldwide producer of cement and aggregates, and one of Mexico's largest companies. Their 'Patrimony Today' program provides workplace, planning, and critical thinking training, and improves housing in low-income communities. This model demonstrated how companies can contribute through philanthropy while maintaining their business model.

19. Comment: The measure of the conference's success will be whether the contacts made, best practices shared and ideas discussed will lead to additional projects that improve education, health care and economic opportunity in Mexico. To this end, NCCEP is talking with several foundations and businesses, both Mexican and American, about forming an international funders' network whose membership would commit to

regular funding of worthy projects in Mexico. Also, NCCEP plans to submit recommendations to the Mexican government on policy changes that would encourage philanthropy and bolster charitable NGOs. Post will also follow-up with NCCEP and other key contacts from the conference to explore projects in which the consulate can participate. End Comment.  
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